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Continuation of Ed Success Task Force

House Bill 13-1244

Testimony to the House Education Committee

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My name is Frank Waterous, and I am a senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center. The Bell is a non-partisan, non-profit research and policy organization founded on progressive values and dedicated to expanding opportunity for all Coloradans.

The Bell Policy Center strongly supports House Bill 13-1244 to continue the work of the Educational Success Task Force and the newly created Educational Success Legislative Committee. Since its creation, the Task Force, along with its associated legislative membership, has been the source of significant and innovative legislation. Its focus on ensuring student success at all levels of our P-20 system, its reliance on practitioner and stakeholder expertise and involvement and its commitment to advancing bipartisan recommendations for improvements in education policy and practice make it an important voice in Colorado's student success efforts.

First, for the past two years, Task Force-recommended bills have provided significant innovations on behalf of Colorado students. In 2012, these bills included:

- Basic-skills testing in high school (SB12-047)
- Higher education credit for prior learning through employment, military service or independent study (HB12-1072)
- Early-warning dropout interventions for middle school students (HB12-1013)
- Associate degree "reverse transfer" awards for qualified students (SB12-045)

This year, they include:

- Basic education & career & technical education pilot programs for low-literacy, low-skilled adults (HB13-1005)
- School district policies related to academic acceleration (HB13-1023)
- Student ID numbers for adult-education programs (SB13-071)

Second, as the bills noted above reveal, the Task Force has actively addressed student success at all levels of our P-20 education system. An excellent example of the thoughtful and wide-ranging discussions engaged in by the Task Force and its legislative members came

at its very first meeting. In considering interventions that could reduce the need for remediation at the post-secondary level, the group's discussion touched on the importance of high-quality early childhood education opportunities, the need for achieving higher levels of literacy in the early grades and the necessity of better helping working-age adults succeed in post-secondary coursework.

Third, the recommendations of the legislative members have consistently been informed by the expert advice of the Task Force's appointed practitioner, researcher and parent participants. By statute these members include experts in early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, childhood and adolescent learning theory, curriculum development and post-secondary education – as well as members of the business community, bipartisan or non-partisan non-profit organizations and parents of students enrolled in Colorado public schools.

Fourth, the Task Force's legislative members have from the outset displayed a genuine commitment to exploring educational options and directions that represent bipartisan approaches to the shared goal of increased student success in our state. This bipartisan tone has been exemplified by the collegial and respectful nature of Task Force discussions, as well as through bipartisan co-sponsorship of many of the Task Force's bills.

For all the reasons noted above, the Bell Policy Center believes that passage of House Bill 13-1244 will ensure that a key voice in Colorado's efforts to improve students' educational success continues to be heard, and continues to provide innovative legislative approaches to critical issues in educational policy and practice. We strongly urge you to support the bill.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the legislative members of the Educational Success Task Force for their service, Representatives Fields and Young for bringing the bill to you today and the committee for the opportunity to share this testimony with you.

If you have any questions, or if I can provide further information, please call me at 303-297-0456 or email me at waterous@bellpolicy.org.